

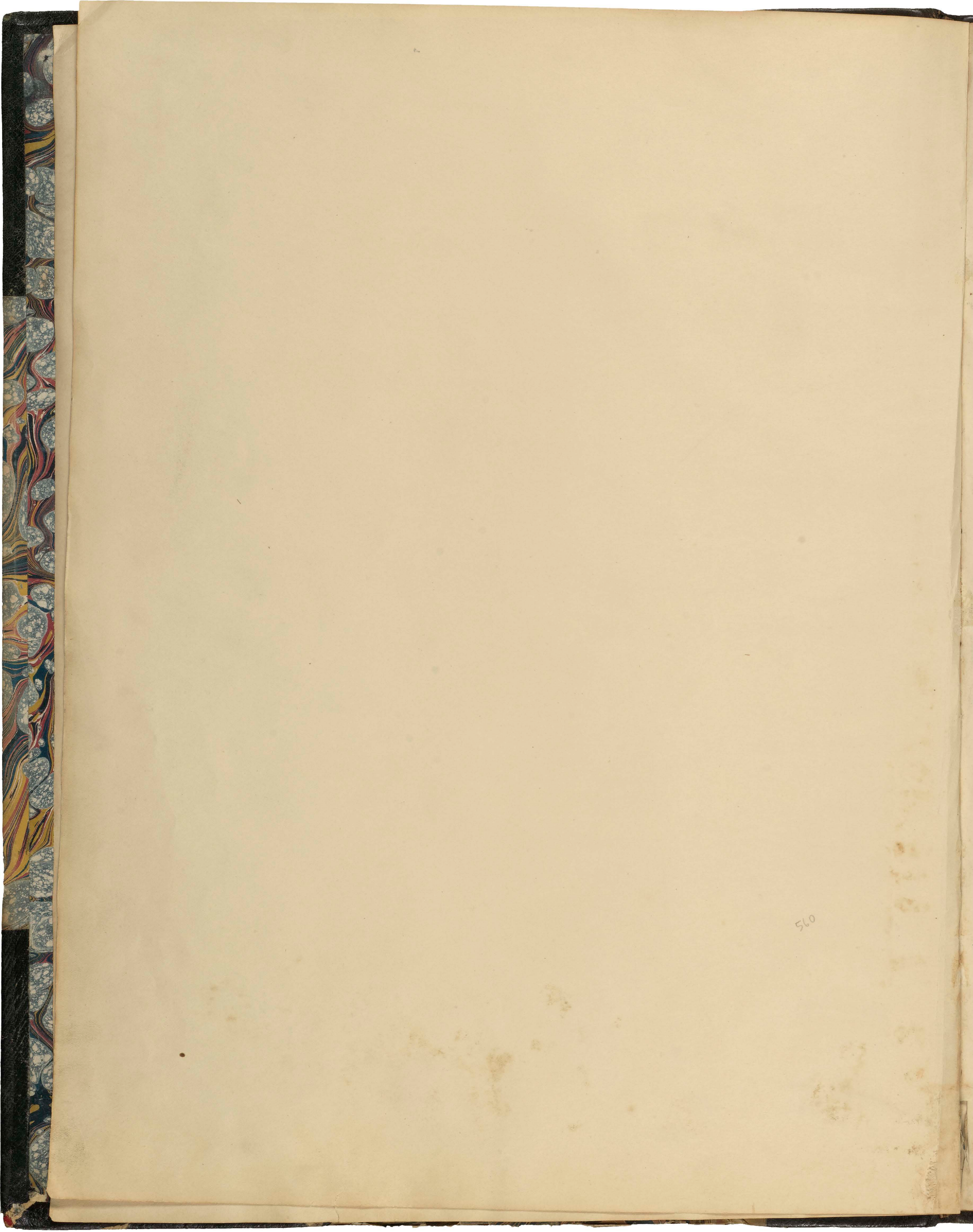




Oak Spring Garden Library



A22



560

ARMLEY HOUSE

near LEEDS in YORKSHIRE

Seat of

BENJAMIN GOTT Esq.





Character and Situation.

There is a difficulty in the treatment of this place which will be better explained by considering the true character of a Villa.

The Villa is supposed to be the occasional, and perhaps only the Summer retreat, of those whose engagements do not admit of a permanent residence in the country; and whether it be the Villa of the Prime Minister, or the Merchant, its character supposes seclusion from intruders, with a command of view rather than of territory: because, the vicinity of a populous neighbourhood, and consequent excessive value of land, will hardly ever allow of a large extent of demesne attached to it. Armley House, in this respect is an exception to most Villas; the command of its annexed property, and of manorial rights over and under the former common-lands, give it a degree of territorial importance beyond that which a Villa generally possesses.

At present it may be said to be about three miles distant from Leeds; but that distance is very precarious, and will daily become less, and less, as the increasing prosperity of the town daily increases its dimensions, and brings it nearer, and nearer, to the spot under our consideration; a circumstance not to be disregarded, when we reflect on the change so recently produced on Mr. Blayd's house in Parklane, which was lately in the country though it is now surrounded by streets and other houses.

Such

Such a change is not however to be feared at Armley House, because almost every thing contiguous is under its immediate control; and it is a proud consideration to reflect, that instead of the adjoining landed property being appropriated to the feeding of a few sheep or cattle, almost every acre supports hundreds of human beings, whose labour and ingenuity are usefully directed to the aggrandisement of the country; while it increases the happiness, by increasing the employment of each individual.

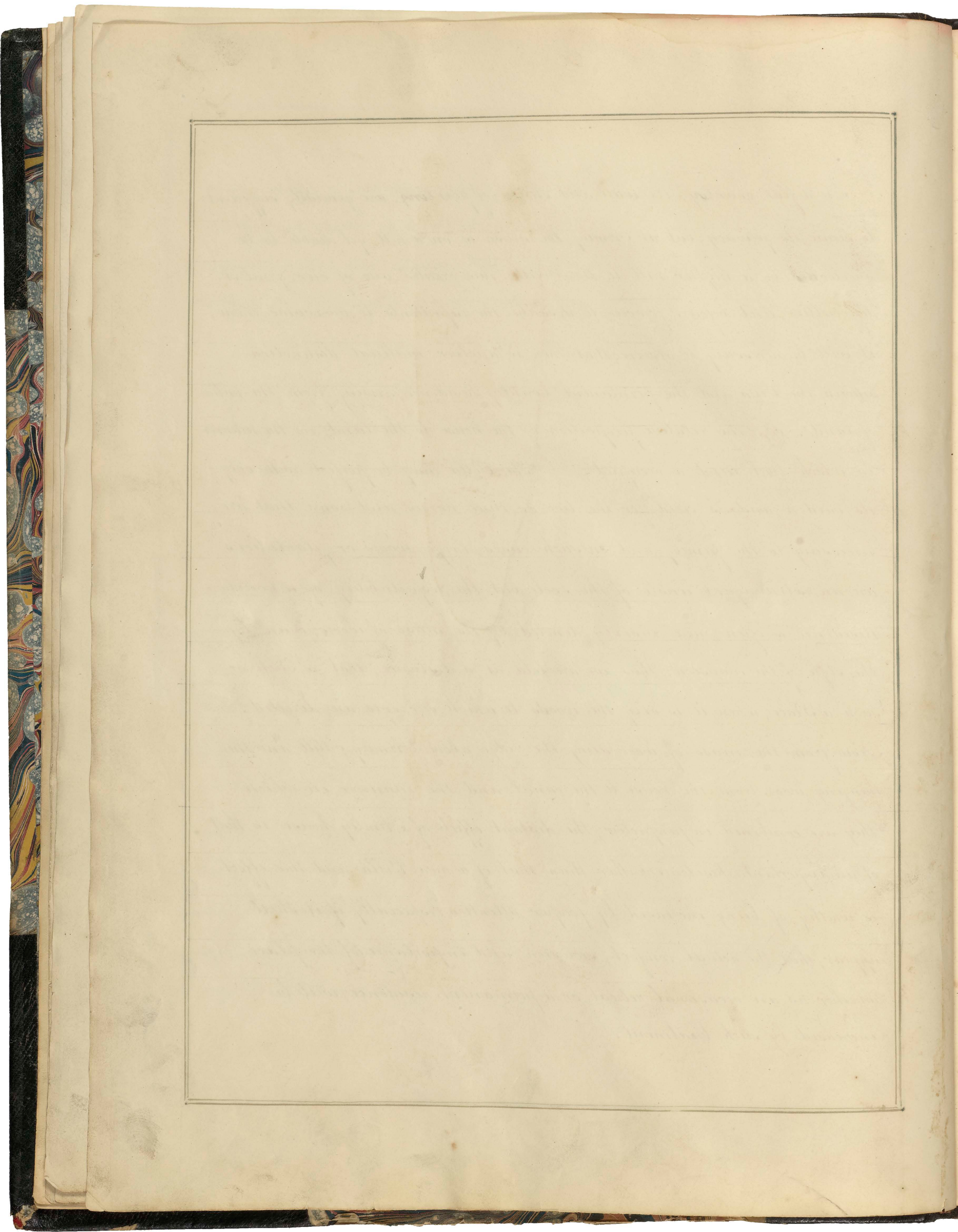
Yet even this consideration cannot compensate for the want of that quiet and seclusion, which the country is supposed to afford, and which is the peculiar characteristic of a perfect Villa. For this reason, the grounds belonging to a Villa, whether large or small, must be inclosed by a fence, impenetrable by man: in some degree to do away this visible confinement, the fence is generally hid by a belt or screen of plantation, narrow in proportion to the value of the soil: and a Walk within such a belt with views only of the interior, is more interesting to the proprietor, than the most extensive prospect which the public can enjoy, equally with himself.

I must therefore suggest every means of making the place securely private, and obviously appropriated, to him who can call it his own: for with respect to the distant prospects, they may be so often obscured by smoke or vapour, and even the contiguous landscape may be so marred by the intusion of unsightly objects, that I may say "*vix ea nostra voco*".

In a flat country, the wall and screen of planting are generally sufficient to secure its privacy; but at Armley, the house is on a hill: yet liable to be overlooked by a higher hill to the South. This creates one of our greatest difficulties, and before I proceed to describe the expedients to overcome them, it will be necessary to observe, that there is another material distinction between the Villa and the permanent Country Residence, arising from the value of land. viz. the relative proportion of the house to the land, and the manner in which that land is occupied. The Villa may be perfect with only its garden, and its field for the two or three horses and cows that are necessary to the family; and in such cases, large woods or plantations are an extravagant waste of the soil: but the respectability of a Country Residence is often more visibly denoted by its mass of woods, than by the style of the mansion; thus we are told at a distance, that is such or such a Place, when it is only the woods to which our eyes are directed. Now from the mass of wood along the ridge above Armley Mill, and the hanging wood from the house to the canal; and the manner in which they are combined in perspective; the distant effect of Armley house is that of an important Residence, rather than that of a mere Villa; and this effect is worthy of being increased by proper attention: especially if it shall appear, that the actual comfort, seclusion, and importance of the place, whether as an occasional retreat, or a permanent residence, will be increased by such treatment.

N.I.





N. 1.



The Sketch N^o. I. will explain the distant effect of such a line of wood, supposing it to be viewed from various parts of the several roads, ~~to Armley~~ from Leeds; for although the foreground may be changed with the particular spot, from whence it may be taken; the general effect of the distant feature of a landscape, will be the same: the woods now disjointed will be connected by the sweeping line of plantation; it will also do away that bleak surface of lawn which now seems to separate the house from the wood below, and leads the eye to naked ground rising higher than that on which the House is built. The alterations here suggested in the house itself, will be explained more fully hereafter.

The Sketch N^o. II is supposed to be taken from the bridge on the road to Kirkstall, and shews the effect of the lines of wood proposed and marked out on the spot; as this is the North side of the place, I have represented it in shadow; and to increase the effect as a picture, under the circumstance of a lowering sky. In this sketch, the bridge and river Ayr form the foreground, but it is for the sake of the distant view of Armley that these two drawings are introduced. In landscape no distant object can be represented but by the contrast of those nearer the eye; and tho' the latter may change at every step we take, the distant scenery will remain nearly the same, however the foreground may be altered: and this sketch will shew the general effect of Armley from every part of the road between Kirkstall Abbey and the bridge.





The Approach.

In the modern practice of Landscape gardening, there is no circumstance that seems to have produced so much error and absurdity, as what is technically called the Approach: which means the manner in which that space of ground is to be passed over, that divides the house from the public road. Formerly indeed, it was a line drawn by rule and of course the shortest

————— "Straight as you please,
"This our wise ancestors well knew,
"And still the nearest line to shew,
"They mark'd it with two rows of trees."

This at Armley, would have been impossible; and therefore the road has very judiciously been made along the valley, and seems perfect as far as the present garden; but from thence it makes a needless "detour" by which it not only goes beyond the house to return back to it, but climbs a hill from whence it descends to the house; after sweeping round a naked brow commanding extensive views beyond the confines of the place: this was probably supposed to give an appearance of extent to the grounds, but in reality as the ground falls from the eye in every direction, very little of it is seen; and the importance of the place is diminished instead of increased, by the attempt to show too much of it at once.

But if the road after quitting the valley, enters a wood as described on the map; the view of an interior lawn surrounded by wood, and the more extended views shewn under the branches of trees, (which will form an appropriate foreground to the distant scenery,)

scenery, will increase the imaginary extent of the place, by shewing it partially; and displaying its scenery by degrees, and in succession: add to this, that this road in a wood will give a shaded and sheltered line of communication, between the house and the kitchen garden*.

When the road comes near the house, it ought to approach it centrally; because it is justified by the symmetry of such a building: and as there are no rooms to look in this direction, and no view to be seen if there were; it will greatly add to the comfort of the house as well as to its importance, to bring the wood across the West front as described by the map, and the two sketches N^o. III and IV. which shew the difference between the present bleak, and the proposed sheltered effect, of the same scene in the view from the Hall door.

* While I mention this subject I must observe, that when on the spot, I hesitated with respect to the best situation for the Garden; supposing it did not already exist, where it is now placed: but on the fullest consideration, I no longer hesitate in declaring, that it cannot be better placed; because it is not probable that the hill field to the South can ever be obtained, and it must always be separated by the foot path: no great advantage therefore can ever be taken of the Views from the house towards the South, and the mass of wood surrounding the garden would even then be desirable.

N. III.





N IV
N

Views from the House.

The principal Views from Armley House, may be confined to that towards the East only; because to the North the wood obstructs all view; and it would not be advisable to open windows towards the South, while they would be so point blank commanded from the opposite high ground: we must therefore turn our attention chiefly towards the East, and embellish the landscape by every improvement of which it may be found capable. These I shall consider technically under the three distances of the painter viz. the foreground — the landscape — and the offskip; beginning with the latter,

The Offskip — consists of the busy town of Leeds, softened by its misty vapour, and the bold rising ground beyond it; which in a clear atmosphere becomes an interesting background to that part of the picture over which the Landscape gardener has no power, however the Landscape painter may harmonize it with the sky of his picture.

The Landscape — or middle distance of this scene, consists of water and buildings, richly accompanied by wood. This will best be explained by the sketch N. V. which is not taken from the centre of the house, either above or below stairs; but from the level of the ground-floor, and from a supposed window in the new room; where the line of canal is more hid, and that of the river more visible: for however advantageous such a canal may be in a commercial point of view; when its artificially stiff and parallel lines are compared with the natural bed of the river Ayre, we cannot in a picturesque point of view but regret Brindley's discovery "that Nature did not intend rivers to be navigable, but that she only created them to supply canals with "Water".

The

The prominent feature of this scene, is that large building which at such a distance and so accompanied by trees, can never fail to be an interesting object by day light, and at night presents a most splendid illumination of gas light. I must here compliment the good taste of the proprietor on the unaffected simplicity of this large building, which looks like what it is — a Mill and Manufactory; and is not disguised by Gothic windows, or other architectural pretensions, too often misapplied by way of ornament. To this part of the picture little can be done, except the more effectually cloathing and hiding if possible, the awkward line of the canal.

I am now to speak of the foreground of this picture; consisting of a lawn which falls so rapidly from the eye, that its whole surface is almost lost by being foreshortened; and is very difficult to represent, even with the help of sheep supposed to diminish in size in proportion as they recede in perspective. At present the small part of the surface which may be shewn, is covered with shrubs and bushes; which are proposed to be removed, and some of the best of the trees to remain, and form an open grove; thro' which a glimpse of the Ayre may be preserved, without opening too much to a scene, that is too populous to form the principal object of the landscape from a Villa: but since so small a portion of the foreground is in our power to be improved, we must endeavour to enrich it by the terrace with flowers and balustrades, which will become a source of ornament and comfort to the whole of the East front, as well as a frame worthy of the picture.

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The House.

Exterior. — Of all the various forms, devised at different times for the plan of a house; that of a centre and two corresponding wings, appears to have been the most impressive and imposing; and is most often adopted in Villas; because it denotes an air of elegance, and perhaps for another reason which I beg leave to explain, viz.^t. That while an irregular building always appears larger than it is, a symmetrical building appears smaller; and therefore as the dimensions of a Villa should not overpower the quantity of land belonging to it, such form is more peculiarly applicable, so far as it relates to the Exterior: but there is a very strong objection to such symmetrical forms, in the want of comfort and convenience within; especially, where it is not on a very large scale; because, a house with wings is in fact three buildings, disjoined from each other by appendages, supposed to connect them, but which never do it effectually through the different floors.

Armley house, (as a mere Villa) requires no alteration: but as a family residence, it would be found very defective; because it actually consists of only two good rooms, one over the other; and the offices are disjoined by being placed on opposite sides of the house. The improvement of the interior, will of course require some alteration in the outside, and therefore some observations on Grecian architecture will not be irrelevant, first observing that it is rather the modern architecture of Rome, than the more severe style of ancient Greece, that has been generally adopted under the name of Grecian. The general outline of Armley house as a centre and two wings, is good so far as it relates to proportion; but the detail of the several parts by which it is meant to be

enriched

enriched; is so incorrect, that it looks like the work of an ignorant country builder, after the design of the more experienced Architect: and may be compared to a good story told in ungrammatical language. When we can from a distance discover, that the general outline is architectural; we expect on a nearer approach to find that the cornices, the mouldings and all the details are correct; and if columns are necessary at the doors, we do not expect to see their place occupied by bedposts; like the common porch or portico of a carpenter to the door of a house in a street. If indeed sufficient shelter could be obtained by a projection over the door supported by consoles, or cantelivers, I should prefer it to the best proportioned columns, in a situation where they must act a subordinate part.* The higher ornaments of Architecture, such as columns, and pilasters, and pediments, give an air of affectation or spruceness when executed on a small scale, and not made a part of the construction of a building; but engrafted upon it as an "appliqué" and subordinate to the great outline of the Whole.

In speaking of Architecture (at page 159) of my quarto work I endeavoured to mark a difference between its ornaments and decorations; in which I fear the common use of the words will not bear me out; but I will endeavour to elucidate the subject, by observing that although I do not advise the ornaments of columns or pilasters to Ormley house; yet it might be greatly improved by the decoration of architraves, and dressings to the windows, and balustrades; which (properly applied) are among the most elegant enrichments of Architecture: for although a small building does not require columns,

* It may perhaps be objected, that in the plans for Oulton, columns are proposed, but that House is so devoid of all Architectural proportions, that it became necessary to advise such expedients as would spread out its base, & altho the columns are not so high as the house; yet such a colonnade would become the principal feature and not act a subordinate part in the design.



N. VI.

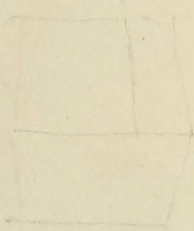
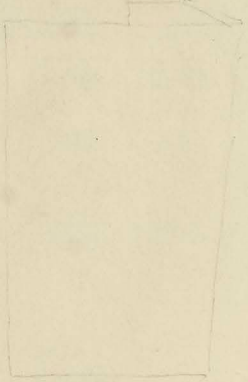
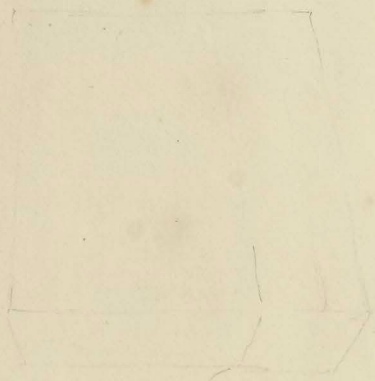
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N. VI.



yet it is apt to degenerate into meanness, without some attention to its proper embellishments: since it is possible to carry the English taste for what is called Simplicity to excess; as much as that taste for over-decoration with which French architects are apt to overload their designs.

Interior. — The improvements of the inside of Armley house are as follow. — First — To remove the kitchen offices into the North wing; and as the ground falls in that direction, the stables and coach houses may be retained below: or otherwise, if there be no objection to removing them to the farm premises, the offices may be kept on a lower level and servants bed rooms made over them. This on the whole would be most advisable, because the heat and smell of stables so near the mansion is apt to be offensive, and produce flies in large quantities, as we see in the Inns of London where the stables are under a part of the house.

Secondly — The present kitchen and room over it may be an apartment, and whether it be occupied as a room for one or more of the younger part of the family, for a relative, or as a bed room when the act of going up and down stairs shall become an exertion; such a room will always be found useful in every family.

Thirdly — The present Entrance being to the West, there must be many days in the year when the wind from the moors, along the vale of Kirkstall, would rush through the small vestibule into the lower room with such violence,

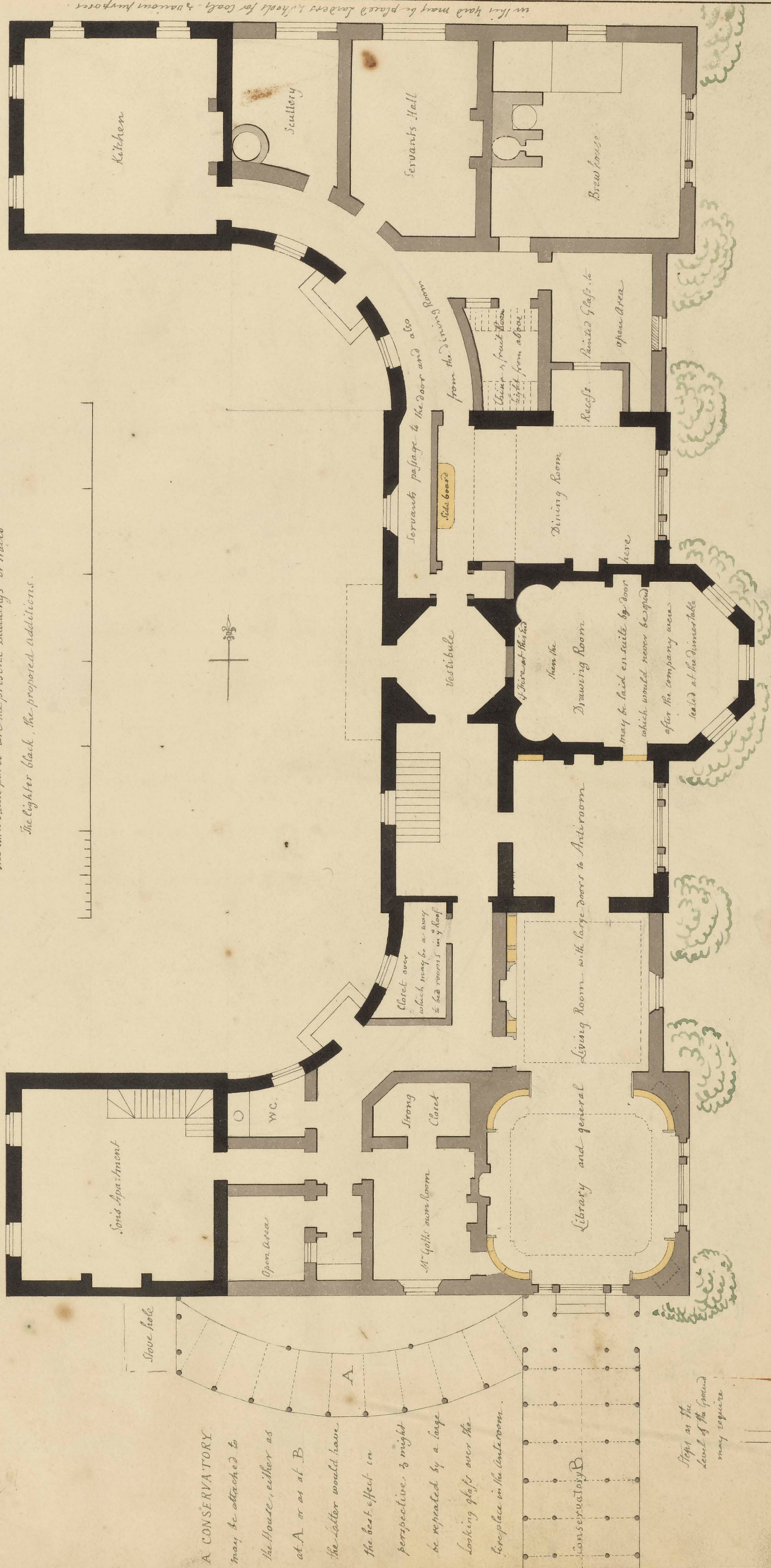
as to render it hardly habitable, especially as a Drawing room, which would be greatly annoyed by the departure of company when carriages are waiting, and both the doors are liable to be opened at once. The most effectual remedy for all this, would be to consider the present small breakfast room as an anteroom, and have no entrance from the vestibule into the Drawing room.—
Fourthly—The present Drawing room above stairs will be better as a bedroom, because the lofty situation of Armley house does not require raising, to improve the View from the windows; on the contrary, as an appropriate landscape it is more tractable from the ground floor, than from a higher level: but as a commanding "Panorama stare" is delightful in fine weather, it might be advisable to provide for it by raising the centre as hinted in the drawing N. IX. This would also furnish another apartment, to which an easy access would be obtained by taking-off a staircase from the end of these octagon rooms, which would otherwise be too large for bed rooms.

Fifthly. The present room called a Library, may be converted into a very good Dining room, by removal of the partition; and if not then sufficiently large, a deep recess opposite the fireplace may be added at any time, to accommodate large parties, by a detached side table for the younger Guests. This room would be greatly improved by enlarging the window to the East, when the light in the side might or might not be preserved, with painted glass or transparent blinds.

GROUND PLAN OF ARMLEY-HOUSE

The dark black parts are the present Buildings or Walls

The lighter black the proposed additions.



A CONSERVATORY

may be attached to the House, either as at A or as at B the latter would have the best effect in perspective, & might be repeated by a large looking glass over the fireplace in the Anteroom.

Conservatory B

Steps on the level of the ground may require

Proposed broad Terrace to be raised within one or two steps of the floor level.

W. P. & S. 1840

Lastly—The principal improvement to the interior of this house as a Mansion or permanent Residence will require a more circumstantial explanation.

The customs and habits of mankind are perpetually changing; and however we may affect to despise the innovation of fashion, it is impossible long to resist its influence. We must live like the world, and with it, while we live in it; and the great world of London must be copied at the distance of two hundred miles, as well in the shape and uses of a Room, as in its furniture. The latter indeed may be changed more often; but it is the duty of the architect to anticipate such changes, as he knows will take place; while he advises alterations to a house. In the last century, every house boasted of one large room; which was called at first a best-parlour, then a Tea-room, and of late a drawing-room; which was never used in common, but with cases over the chairs, and with the grate and carpet carefully covered up, this dank cold room was deemed sacred to the chilling circle of a formal visit; when neither a book nor an instrument were ever suffered to litter and disgrace its solemn state. In those times the Lady and family lived in a smaller room, and the gentleman in that which contained his guns, with a few books in glass cases—All this is now changed; it has of late been discovered, that the largest room in a house is the best to live in; and whether in a cottage or a palace, one large room of irregular shape is indispensable; this to be quite comfortable, should have two or three fire-places, and a variety of angles and corners and recesses, for what is now called "separate establishments".

The

The books of the present day form as much a part of the furniture of a room, as did formerly the framed and glazed prints, which are now transposed in large portfolios, or bound up with unmeaning letter press. Organs, pianos, and harps, and tables of every kind, are stuffed into a room, together with such a variety of chairs, as if mankind were made of different shapes, and each individual must have a seat adapted to his own person; to all this, we must add that profusion of cabinets, and sofas, and footstools, and music stands, and workboxes, and flower pots, and clocks, and bronzes, and cut glass, and china, and library-tables; covered with books, and pamphlets, and reviews, and newspapers; which contribute to the elegant and rational enjoyment of modern life: and which like all improvement may be carried too far, and sometimes endanger the breaking one's shins in a room of fifty feet long.

In the arrangement of Armley House provision is made for such a room, as will a few years hence not be found too large or too small for the use and comfort of a family-residence; although it may perhaps, at present, be deemed larger than the immediate occasion requires, but if the room be built of less dimensions it cannot easily be enlarged hereafter.

We often find the most convenient & comfortable rooms to live in, are those, which in old Houses have been made by taking down partitions & laying two or more together; & the present fashion of Cloth Draperies (like the loose Arras & Tapestry of former times) greatly contributes to render such rooms equally habitable by large or small parties: it is therefore become a part of the Architects study to contrive such rooms which may easily be thus reduced, while it is impossible by any contrivance to make a room larger than it is built, & "Malum Consilium quod non mutari potest."

Conclusion

True Embellishment of every kind must, after all, depend on that strict Congruity by which the Ornament is properly adapted to the object to be embellished: Thus objects, the Works of Art, may be enriched by accompaniments, the Works of Nature; but a natural Scene will not always be improved by artificial accompaniments. It is perhaps, hardly possible to elucidate this more forcibly than by the three following Drawings. The Scenery of Kirkstall Vale would not be improved by any foreground more trim & Artificial than that represented in the annexed Vignette N. VIII.

[supposed to be a small opening in the Young plantation proposed near Armley House] While on the contrary the profusion of flowers & trailing or climbing plants disposed with such neatness & attention as buildings of every kind admit, become embellishments equally applicable to the residence of Affluence & Elegance; or to the humble Cottage of its poor dependant.



N. VIII.





At the back of the small Collage near the Entrance Gate there are some Tenements on the bank, to which the inhabitants have now access by a yard & Steps which destroy the connection with the Drive — access may be given by an elevated foot bridge & then the Drive may be opened to the grounds & by removing only a Malthouse of little use, great improvement in the scenery may be produced without much expense & without the sacrifice of ornaments which rather increase than injure the Intricacy of its Effect.



N. X.

